

# Why Lincoln Was a Lawyer!

## A Discussion of American Citizenship

### Background:

In 2009, the nation will celebrate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of President Abraham Lincoln's birth. National, regional, and local bicentennial commissions are organizing a wide array of activities to commemorate. Following up on the success of the program on February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2009, we hope that hundreds of Hoosier volunteers will visit additional Hoosier schools on Law Day (May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009) to share with students some of President Lincoln's most heartfelt beliefs—his ideas about the importance of the law and its role in shaping American citizens.

### Free Lesson Materials for Teachers:

The Indiana Supreme Court created a series of free lesson plans for distribution to teachers across our state to help them connect Abraham Lincoln to the ideas of citizenship, civic virtue and the law. These materials are aligned with the state social studies standards and provide lesson ideas, primary documents, images, and supplemental resources that focus on how Lincoln displayed and defined the ideal of American citizenship. Teachers may either request a hardcopy of the materials or download them from the Courts in the Classroom website [www.in.gov/judiciary/citc/lincoln](http://www.in.gov/judiciary/citc/lincoln).



### What Can You Do:

We are looking for volunteers (judges, attorneys, paralegals, and law students) to visit classrooms all over Indiana. Volunteers may discuss any aspect of Lincoln's life that is of particular interest to them. We have created this handout to highlight the materials provided to the teachers. This is simply a starting point. Once you have been matched with a teacher, you might want to contact him/her for suggestions about material that will fit into their classroom objectives.

*Questions about how to  
volunteer for this program,  
contact Elizabeth Osborn at  
[eosborn@courts.state.in.us](mailto:eosborn@courts.state.in.us)*

### How to Volunteer:

The Indiana Supreme Court will register and match volunteers and schools. If you have any questions about how to volunteer for this program, the lesson materials, or the program in general, please contact Dr. Elizabeth R. Osborn, [eosborn@courts.state.in.us](mailto:eosborn@courts.state.in.us).

## Getting Started:

On the following pages we have included suggested discussion starters that coordinate with the lesson materials provided to the teachers and a list of standards that teachers in each grade must meet that lend themselves to this topic. (This material is also available to volunteers and other interested parties at [www.in.gov/judiciary/citc/lincoln](http://www.in.gov/judiciary/citc/lincoln).) If you would like to take copies of these documents to your classroom, they are easily accessible from [www.in.gov/judiciary/citc/lincoln](http://www.in.gov/judiciary/citc/lincoln).

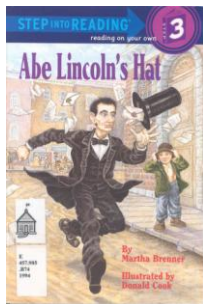
## Topic 1: How do you define Citizenship?

### Suggested Discussion Questions

- What makes you a citizen of the United States?
- Do you have to be born here?
- Do you have to fill out any paperwork?
- How do we learn to be good citizens?
- Can we lose our citizenship?

### Grade Specific Suggestions:

#### Grades K-5:



#### *Abe Lincoln's Hat* (by Martha Brenner)

The Indiana Supreme Court has purchased copies of this book for volunteers to take, read, and leave in elementary school classrooms. This book follows Lincoln from boyhood to the Presidency, with a particular focus on his practice of the law.

### **Documents You Could Use:**

- Declaration of Independence
- U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights
- 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment

Available at

[www.IN.gov/judiciary/citc/lincoln](http://www.IN.gov/judiciary/citc/lincoln)

#### Grades 6-8:

Social Studies Standards for middle school students emphasizes citizenship in very general terms including comparing American citizenship with that of Canada and the United Kingdom as well as non-western countries. If you have ever traveled to a foreign country, you might share your observations. For example, it is very difficult to own a gun in most other countries. In Singapore, you can be arrested and sentenced to jail time for littering. Eighth grade students are expected to be familiar with the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.

#### Grades 9-12:

High school students are expected to be familiar with citizens' rights as defined in America's founding documents like the Declaration of Independence. American History standards for high school students emphasize many Civil War topics: the election of Abraham Lincoln, the Emancipation Proclamation, and the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and 15<sup>th</sup> Amendments.

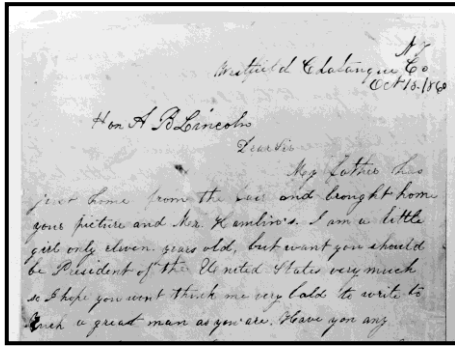
## Topic 2: What are the “rights” of Citizenship?

### Suggested Discussion Questions

- What specific rights do we have as citizens of the United States?
- Can the government ever take away these rights?
- If you aren't a citizen of the United States, but live here, are you entitled to the same rights as citizens?

### Grade Specific Suggestions

#### Grades K-5:



#### *Grace's Letter to Lincoln* (by Peter and Connie Roop)

The Indiana Supreme Court has purchased copies of this book for volunteers to take, read, and leave in elementary school classrooms. This is a short chapter book about a young girl who writes a letter to Lincoln, and he answers! The book covers voting rights, the election of 1860, slavery, and the Underground Railroad. A digital image of the actual letter is available on our website

[www.in.gov/judiciary/citc/lincoln](http://www.in.gov/judiciary/citc/lincoln).

### **Documents You Could Use:**

- U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights
- Ex Parte Merryman
- The Gettysburg Address
- Emancipation Proclamation
- Grace Bedell's letter to Lincoln

Available at

[www.IN.gov/judiciary/citc/lincoln](http://www.IN.gov/judiciary/citc/lincoln)

#### Grades 6-8:

Learning to work with primary source documents is a common objective for middle school social studies and language arts standards. Students are asked to read the documents and to analyze the language and historical context. A close examination of the language in either the Gettysburg Address or the Emancipation Proclamation would help teachers meet this objective.

#### Grades 9-12:

High school government standards include a significant emphasis on the civil and constitutional rights in America's founding documents. There is a specific emphasis on the government's ability to limit these rights and appropriate citizen response (lobbying, writing, protests, etc.).

### **Topic 3: What are the “responsibilities” of citizenship?**

#### **Suggested Discussion Questions**

- As a citizen of the United States what are your obligations to your government?
- Is anything specific required of you?
- What happens if you don't vote?
- Or, don't pay your taxes?

#### **Documents You Could Use:**

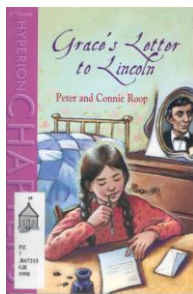
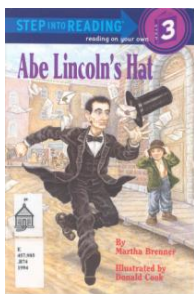
- U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights
- Ex Parte Milligan
- 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment
- Grace Bedell's letter to Lincoln

Available at

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#### **Grade Specific Suggestions**

##### Grades K-5:



In the materials provided to elementary teachers, lesson #3 draws on the two texts mentioned above: *Abe Lincoln's Hat* and *Grace's Letter to Lincoln*. Reading either book and helping students determine what is fact and what is fiction meets several of the required social studies and language arts standards.

##### Grades 6-8:

The comparison of voting rights between the U.S. and other nations is a specific social studies standard for middle school students. Any information you could share about voting in other nations (especially Japan, China, South Africa, Egypt, or Australia) would be very helpful. Eighth grade students are expected to be familiar with the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights, and to begin to learn about landmark U.S. Supreme Court cases like *Ex Parte Milligan*.

##### Grades 9-12:

Lesson materials for teachers focus on Lincoln's suspension of habeas corpus and imposition of martial law. Speakers might engage students in a discussion of these topics to illustrate the structure and limits on the government's power.